

February 11, 2025

To the Members of the Senate Elections Committee,

I am writing to share my perspective on SF 828 as a recent candidate and now elected city council member in Rochester. In 2024, I ran for office as a first-time candidate in a non-partisan local election, managing my own campaign and finances with a small volunteer team.

Navigating the election process required significant research, and I found the Rochester City Clerk's office to be an informative and responsive resource. They efficiently processed my filings and provided clear guidance. I believe local clerks and auditors should continue to play a key role in elections. However, standardizing campaign finance reporting at the state level could improve transparency, streamline support, and enable modernization; and I believe it is worth taking the time to study.

While my finance background made campaign finance reporting easier for me, many candidates serve as their own treasurers and may struggle with financial filings. A common piece of advice from mentors in this process was to not serve as my own treasurer, but I chose to do it anyway. A centralized system with clear guidance could reduce barriers and prevent errors, such as those I witnessed in my race when a candidate mistakenly submitted reports to Olmsted County. Their reports never appeared on the City of Rochester's Campaign Finance Report website.

From a public transparency standpoint, a single, accessible repository for campaign finance reports—covering city, county, school board, and other races—would benefit voters. Since these races appear on the same ballot, it makes sense to consolidate records rather than dispersing them across multiple websites. Transparency is fundamental to democracy, and this reform would enhance public access to critical election information.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate the committee's work on this issue and would be happy to provide further insights from my experience.

Sincerely,

Nick Miller

Rochester City Council, Ward 2